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Certification for Professional Spiritual Care: Writing Guide for Common Competencies May 2020

The following is a writing guide for the Competency Essay(s) (APC, NAJC)/Narrative Statement (NACC) to be written by the Applicant in regard to the Common Competencies for Certification for Professional Spiritual Care (Chaplains). It is designed to provide a clearer understanding behind the meaning for each competency and what your committee [interview team] members will be looking for when reading your essays.

As you write your essays/Narrative, please keep these thoughts in mind:

1. The Essay(s)/Narrative Statement provide an opportunity for you to articulate the theory (theology) and practice that you have developed through your education, formation, training and experience.
2. Your committee (APC)/interview team (NACC)/interview panel (NAJC) will be looking for a balance of theory and practice. What is your understanding of each of the competencies, and how do you apply it to your provision of spiritual care? Be clear in your working definition of each and then give examples to demonstrate them.
3. Writing your essays is not a time to be shy about your competence. Let your committee/interview team know that you demonstrate these competencies. If you don't tell the committee, then they will determine you do not understand the competencies and/or you are not demonstrating them. Claim your strength and value as a quality spiritual care provider!

Section I: Integration of Theory and Practice Competencies

The primary emphasis of these competencies is your theory and its congruence with your provision of spiritual care. Numbers in parentheses following each competency denote ACPE Outcomes that support the competencies.

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

ITP1: Articulate an approach to spiritual care, rooted in one's faith/spiritual tradition that is integrated with a theory of professional practice. (ACPE Outcomes L1.1, L2.1)

What are the roots and foundation of your faith/spiritual tradition? Demonstrate how you integrate these theoretical beliefs in your practice of spiritual care.

ITP2: Incorporate a working knowledge of psychological and sociological disciplines and religious beliefs and practices in the provision of spiritual care. (ACPE Outcomes L1.2, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4)

Psychology and sociology inform what professional spiritual care providers understand and how they practice. What are the psychological and sociological theories and insights that influence and support what you do within the context of spiritual care? Demonstrate how you integrate these key theories in your spiritual care.

ITP3: Incorporate the spiritual and emotional dimensions of human development into one's practice of care. (ACPE Outcomes L1.7, L2.2, L2.4,)

The cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual dimensions and needs of individuals evolve as they progress through each stage of human development. Spiritual care providers relate in distinct ways with children and adults. How do you understand those differences? How do you as a spiritual care provider adapt your practices in light of those differences?

ITP4: Incorporate a working knowledge of different ethical theories appropriate to one's professional context. (ACPE Outcome L2.2)

How do you understand the commonly used principles of ethics - personal, religious, organizational, situational, medical, etc.? What ethical theories do you draw from that inform your spiritual practice? Demonstrate, using examples from your professional context, how you incorporate these theories in your spiritual care.

ITP5: Articulate a conceptual understanding of group dynamics and organizational behavior. (ACPE Outcomes L1.2, L1.5, L2.2, L2.5, L2.7)

Essential to the provision of effective spiritual care is the understanding that people interact with others differently depending on the dynamics, size, and focus of the group in the contexts in which they are located. What concepts and theories have been useful to you in understanding how people interact in family systems, group settings, interdisciplinary teams, and organizations? Articulate your understanding of how relational dynamics impact people's behavior in both group and organizational settings.

ITP6: Articulate how primary research and research literature inform the profession of chaplaincy and one's spiritual care practice. (ACPE Outcome L1.6)

Spiritual care providers integrate research literacy and may conduct research to ensure that their spiritual care is current and innovative in their practice. Demonstrate through examples how you are utilizing current research literature in your spiritual care practice and work with interdisciplinary team members. If applicable, what primary research have you participated in and what were the key findings? How are you integrating your findings in your spiritual care practice?

Section II: Professional Identity and Conduct Competencies

The primary emphasis of these competencies is your understanding of your professional identity and how it influences your conduct as a spiritual care provider. Numbers in parentheses following each competency denote ACPE Outcomes that support the competencies.

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PIC1: Be self-reflective, including identifying one’s professional strengths and limitations in the provision of care. (ACPE Outcomes L1.2, L1.9, L2.1, L2.6, L2.9)

Being self-reflective -- including awareness of our strengths and limitations – is critical in the provision of spiritual care. What are your self- perceived strengths and how do these contribute your provision of spiritual care? How do you adapt, manage, or work through your self-perceived limitations? Provide examples of how you assess and self-supervise these tendencies in your professional practice.

PIC2: Articulate ways in which one’s feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions affect professional practice. (ACPE Outcomes L1.1, L1.2, L2.1, L2.6, L2.9)

Your feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions impact the way you assess, make meaning, connect with, and provide care to others. Identify your understanding of feelings, attitudes, values, and assumptions as it relates to your spiritual care. Demonstrate using examples how you assess and evaluate these concepts’ impact on your spiritual care. How do you use them as resources to provide competent spiritual care?

PIC3: Attend to one’s own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. (ACPE Outcomes L1.3, L1.9, L2.5,L2.7,L2.9)

In order to provide effective spiritual care for others, you must practice holistic self-care. Discuss, using examples, from your professional context how you attend to your own physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. What is your practice of self-care? Demonstrate how your personal practice of self-care impacts your ability to care for others more competently in your professional practice.

PIC4: Function in a manner that respects the physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual boundaries of others. (ACPE Outcomes L1.2, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.6)

Demonstrating competence in spiritual care relies on knowing and respecting your boundaries and those of your care-recipients. Discuss your understanding of boundaries as it informs your spiritual care. Demonstrate using examples how you practice humility and respect within the boundaries of the physical, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs of diverse populations you serve.

PIC5: Use one’s professional authority as a spiritual care provider appropriately. (ACPE Outcomes L1.4, L1.5, L2.3, L2.5, L2.6, L2.7, L2.9)

Authority, appropriately engaged, is an inherent dynamic in your role as a spiritual care provider. What is the foundation of your professional authority? How might your own personal authority inform your professional authority? Demonstrate using examples how you live into your professional authority as a spiritual care provider.

PIC6 Advocate for the persons in one’s care. (ACPE Outcomes L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.7)

Advocacy is central to ensuring the provision of competent spiritual care. How do you understand the concept of advocacy? Demonstrate using examples from your professional context how you

incorporate advocacy in your spiritual practice. What informs when and how you step into the role of advocate?

PIC7: Function within the Common Code of Ethics for Chaplains, Pastoral Counselors, Clinical Pastoral Educators, and Students (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L2.2, L2.5, L2.8, L2.9)

You have read the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals, standards of professional ethics that have been established and agreed upon by the primary spiritual caregiving organizations of North America. How do you ensure that you abide by this Code in your provision of spiritual care? Select one principle from the Code of Ethics for Spiritual Care Professionals and demonstrate how you integrate it into your spiritual practice.

PIC8: Communicate effectively orally and in writing. (ACPE Outcomes L1.3, L1.4, L2.5, L2.6, L2.7)

This is an observed competency. No writing needed.

The ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, is critical to ensuring effective interaction with members of the interdisciplinary care team and with care-recipients. In addition, effective communication in your written materials and congruence of your self-presentation with your written materials will be assessed in your engagement with the Certification Committee.

PIC9: Present oneself in a manner that reflects professional behavior, including appropriate attire, and grooming. (ACPE Outcomes L1.3, L1.4, L2.5, L2.6, L2.7, L2.9)

This is an observed competency. No writing needed.

Your visual presentation and self-presentation in interactions with others contributes to their perceptions of your degree of professional competence. This holds true in your appearance with the Certification Committee as well. Congruence between your self-perception and others' perceptions of you also suggests a degree of self-awareness of how who you are as a person impacts your relationships.

Section III: Professional Practice Skills Competencies

The primary emphases of these competencies are your skills in providing spiritual care.

Numbers in parentheses following each competency denote ACPE Outcomes that support the competencies.

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

PPS1: Establish, deepen and conclude professional spiritual care relationships with sensitivity, openness, and respect. (ACPE Outcomes L1.4, L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.7)

The ability to connect spiritually with care-recipients while engaging them with sensitivity, openness, and respect is essential to developing rapport and building relationships, especially as they evolve over time. Demonstrate, using examples, the skills you employ to initiate, deepen, and conclude spiritual relationships with care-recipients.

PPS2: Provide effective spiritual support that contributes to well-being of the care-recipients, their families, and staff. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.6)

What are indicators of “effective spiritual support” and “well-being” from your perspective? How do you assess them? Demonstrate using examples the skills, strategies, and interventions you utilize to provide effective spiritual support and foster well-being with care-recipients, their families, and staff.

PPS3: Provide spiritual care that respects diversity and differences including, but not limited to culture, gender, sexual orientation and spiritual/religious practices. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.4, L2.6)

Competent spiritual care respects diversity and differences. How do you act with openness to serve all people with cultural and spiritual humility? Demonstrate, using examples, how inclusiveness of culture, gender, spiritual/religious practices, and sexual orientation are demonstrated in your practice.

PPS4: Triage and manage crises in the practice of spiritual care. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.6)

Many care-recipients present with more spiritual needs than can realistically be addressed. How do you establish priorities in the face of a crisis to provide the most effective spiritual care? Demonstrate using examples from crises how you assess the underlying dynamics, triage, develop, and evaluate interventions in your spiritual care?

PPS5: Provide spiritual care to persons experiencing loss and grief. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.6)

The experience of grief and loss is a universal phenomenon and part of what it means to be human. How do you understand grief holistically? Demonstrate using examples how you attend to grief, mourning, and bereavement needs in a variety of settings.

PPS6: Provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the care-recipients, families, and staff. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4)

What are effective religious/spiritual resources you provide in your professional practice? How do you determine the effectiveness of these resources? Demonstrate using examples how you assess and provide religious/spiritual resources appropriate to the needs of care-recipients, families, and staff.

PPS7: Develop, coordinate, and facilitate public worship/spiritual practices appropriate to diverse settings and needs. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.6)

People of diverse religious/spiritual traditions may engage their spirituality privately and/or by gathering in community to worship the Holy as they understand it. They may also participate in spiritual practices, rituals, rites, and sacraments from their faith tradition. Demonstrate using examples how you assist in the observance of or use ritual, worship, and other faith or spiritual practices as resources for persons and communities.

PPS8: Facilitate theological/spiritual reflection for those in one’s care practice. (ACPE Outcomes L1.1, L1.2, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4)

Facilitating care-recipients’ theological/spiritual reflection often leads to increased understanding and insight. This process may support them in finding purpose, value, and direction in their lives. Demonstrate using examples how you assist those in your care to reflect on the meaning of their situation and employ their beliefs as resources for their healing.

PPS 9: Facilitate group processes, such as family meetings, post trauma, staff debriefing, and support groups. (ACPE Outcomes L1.4, L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4, L2.6)

Understanding group process depends on your ability to assess, understand, and evaluate relational dynamics in your spiritual care relationships. How do you facilitate spiritual care through group processes? Demonstrate using examples as listed in the competency how you utilize your skills and/or coordinate with other professionals to facilitate group processes.

PPS10: Formulate and utilize spiritual assessments, interventions, outcomes, and care plans in order to contribute effectively to the well-being of the person receiving care. (ACPE Outcomes L1.5, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.4)

Conducting spiritual assessments are an essential contribution to the needs and well-being of care-recipients. What type of spiritual assessment tools do you use? Demonstrate using examples how your spiritual assessment and care planning process assists the persons you serve. How do you integrate and evaluate their effectiveness in terms of your care-recipients’ well-being?

PPS11: Document one’s spiritual care effectively in the appropriate records. (ACPE Outcomes L1.7, L2.4, L2.5, L2.7)

Documentation of your spiritual care is one way to facilitate interdisciplinary communication. How do you communicate the facets of your emotional and spiritual care effectively for the benefit of other disciplines? Demonstrate using examples the process you follow to document your assessment and provision of spiritual care.

Section IV: Organizational Leadership Competencies

The primary emphasis in these competencies is your ability to lead within the setting(s) in which you provide spiritual care. Numbers in parentheses following each competency denote ACPE Outcomes that support the competencies.

The candidate for certification will demonstrate the ability to:

OL1: Promote the integration of spiritual care into the life and service of the institution in which one functions. (ACPE Outcomes L1.1, L1.2, L2.1, L2.2, L2.5, L2.7)

Drawing from your professional context, identify your institution’s mission, core values, and/or vision. Demonstrate using examples how spiritual care is integrated in your institution. How does your leadership facilitate and benefit the mission of your organization/institution?

OL2: Establish and maintain professional and interdisciplinary relationships. (ACPE Outcomes L1.3, L1.4, L1.7, L2.2, L2.5, L2.6, L2.7)

Spiritual care providers are key members of the interdisciplinary team. How do you relate with and attend to these professional relationships? Demonstrate using examples how you build, lead, and maintain these professional relationships. How do you educate about spiritual care and the role of spiritual care providers on the interdisciplinary team?

OL3: Understand and function within the institutional culture and systems, including utilizing business principles and practices appropriate to one's role in the organization. (ACPE Outcomes L1.2, L1.4, L1.5, L2.2, L2.5, L2.6, L2.7)

Describe your institution's culture and systems. How do you learn about the culture and systems within your organization and become a functioning, contributing leader within them? Demonstrate using examples how you lead within your institution's identified culture and systems. Include how principles and practices from leadership and management, as applicable to your spiritual care provider role, have proven effective.

OL4: Promote, facilitate, and support ethical decision-making in one's workplace. (ACPE Outcomes L1.1, L1.4, L2.2, L2.3, L2.5, L2.6, L2.7, L2.9)

Professional organizations define and abide by a set of ethical principles. What is your role and function in promoting, facilitating, and supporting ethical decision-making and care in your particular setting? Demonstrate using examples how you lead by promoting, facilitating, and supporting ethical decision-making in your context.

OL5: Foster a collaborative relationship with community clergy and faith group leaders. (ACPE Outcomes L1.1, L1.7, L2.2, L2.3, L2.6, L2.7)

As a spiritual care provider, you serve as a liaison, connecting care-recipients to their spiritual/religious communities. How do you establish and maintain relationships with area faith group leaders? Demonstrate using examples how you lead in fostering collaborative relationships with community clergy and faith group leaders.